The Happineſs of Good Men after Death.

A SERMON AT THE FUNERAL OF Mr. Robert Caſtell,

Late of *Deptford* in *Kent.*

Preached in the

Pariſh Church of Deptford,

Auguſt the 19*th.* 1698.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Relations and Executors of the Deceaſed:

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I heard a Voice from Heaven ſaying unto me, Write; Bleſſed are the Dead which dye in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.

THat the Importance of theſe words is very great, we need no other Argument to convince us, than the ſolemn manner in which they are delivered to the Apoſtle. Such is the expreſs Command, that they ſhould be carefully preſerved by writing, *I heard a Voice from Heaven ſaying unto me, Write; Bleſſed are the dead which dye in the Lord from henceforth.* To which is added yet farther the Teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt, confirming the Truth of what that Voice had dictated, and declaring particularly, wherein the Bleſſedneſs of ſuch perſons conſiſts, *Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.* Theſe forms are ſuch Preparations,

as always ſpeak the matter uſhered in by them to be of mighty Conſequence; And are intended to awaken our Minds more powerfully, and to recommend it to our beſt and moſt attentive Conſideration.

The immediate Occaſion and Deſign of the Paſſage now before us, was plainly to fortify the Chriſtians againſt ſome very violent Perſecutions, which St. *John* had a certain foreſight given him of, and deſcribes accordingly by very terrible Circumſtances. Inſomuch, that he pronounces it here a very great Happineſs, to be taken out of the World, before thoſe Calamitous and Trying times ſhould come, which might endanger the ſhaking the moſt reſolute Faith and Patience, even of the beſt Men. Or (as ſome other Interpreters think) he deſcribes the Bleſſedneſs of thoſe faithful Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, whom the Grace of God ſhould enable to perſevere unto the end, and to ſuffer Martyrdom for the Doctrines of his Goſpel. Thoſe perſons being ſometimes ſaid, with a peculiar Emphaſis, to *dye in the Lord*, who ſuffer in his Cauſe, and lay down their Lives for his ſake.

But there is no neceſſity, nor indeed any ſufficient Reaſon, for confining this Expreſſion to thoſe times of Primitive Perſecution only, or to the Martyrs who ſuffered in them. For, as every ſin-

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cere good Man, who heartily embraces the Faith of Christ, and whose Conversation is such as becomes that Faith, is said in Scripture to * *live unto the Lord*; so every one who continues in that Belief and Obedience to the End of his Days, is very truly and properly said, when God takes him out of the World, to † *sleep in Jesus*, and *to dye in the Lord*.

* 2 Cor. v. 15.

† 1 Thes. iv. 14.

And thus, it is manifest. not our Own only, but the Christian Church in general, hath constantly understood the Text, by making it in many antient Liturgies a part of the Burial Service: And so declaring the Blessedness here to belong to every deceased Person, who lives and dyes a worthy Member of her Communion.

Having therefore so good Authority to bear me out, I shall make no difficulty to treat of my Text, in this larger and more popular Sense; and so to apply it to the occasion of our present meeting, that we may gather from hence those useful and comfortable Reflections, which may minister to us a Reasonable Hope of *our Departed Brother's* Happiness, and a joyful Expectation of *our Own*.

In order hereunto, I shall, so far as the time will give me leave, do these three things.

I. *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to repreſent to you the Happy State of Good Men after Death, as the Words have here deſcribed it to us.

II. *Secondly*, I ſhall, from this Doctrine ſo eſtabliſhed, draw ſome few Inferences, which may be of uſe to us, both for the Conduct of our Lives in general, and more particularly ſeaſonable upon theſe Melancholy Occaſions.

III. And then in the Third and laſt Place, I ſhall apply the Subſtance of my two former heads yet more cloſely, to the Circumſtances of the Perſon, whoſe mortal part now lyes before us.

1. *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to repreſent to you the happy State of Good Men after Death, as the Words have here deſcribed it to us. And I may well ſay I ſhall endeavour only, that which it is not poſſible for me worthily to effect. For Who indeed can repreſent it juſtly? What Tongue of Men or Angels can find expreſſions ſtrong and ſignificant enough? What Images are ſo bright, ſo glorious? What finite Underſtandings of a Capacity ſo large, that they ſhould contain adequate Ideas of that Bliſs, to which nothing we are acquainted with in this Life is equal, nothing like, nothing

in any degree comparable? That Bliſs, which would loſe a great part of its Perfection, if Senſe and feeble Reaſon could fully comprehend it; and whoſe peculiar Excellence (we are told) it is, that * *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* The utmoſt therefore which you muſt expect in this caſe is only to have it drawn in little; In ſuch proportions as frail Men are capable of; by Reſemblances taken from things familiar to us; by ſetting it in oppoſition to the Miſeries we are at preſent expoſed to; and by ſuch Other Conſiderations, as are of Value and Weight with us, in the Affairs and Tranſactions of humane Life. This is the Method, which the Holy Spirit hath made uſe of here: And the Arguments, by which he raiſes our eſteem of that Bleſſedneſs pronounced from Heaven *upon the Dead which dye in the Lord*, ſeem to be theſe Three.

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

1. Firſt. The Troubles ſuch Men are delivered from. *They reſt from their Labours.*

2. Secondly. The good Acceptance and great Reward, which they ſhall after Death receive, for what they have done well during the preſent Life. *Their Works do follow them.*

3. Thirdly

3. Thirdly. The Time when they enter upon this Happineſs, intimated in that Term fixed here, *Bleſſed are the Dead which dye in the Lord from henceforth.*

1. Firſt. They who dye in the Lord are *Bleſſed* in regard of the Troubles they are delivered from, *They reſt from their Labours.* I will not, I need not, upon this occaſion undertake to ſhew, how ſore and manifold theſe Labours are. For This is an Argument that comes home to the Senſe and Experience of every one of us. All that hear me are able to go before me in the Reflection, how thick we are beſet with Troubles and Afflictions on every Side, in our Bodies and our Souls, in our publick and our private Capacities. The Vanities of Youth, and the Infirmities of Age: The Difficulties of Supporting theſe Bodies, and the perpetual Wants and Weakneſſes to which they are Subject; The lingring and the acute Diſtempers, the ſenſible decays, and the more ſenſible Pains, that waſte and tear and torment them. The Miſeries of an unhappy Temper, and Overflowings of a black heavy blood, which intercept all light and comfort, and condemn the Soul to the dark diſmal priſon of a melancholy Conſtitution; The Violence of Paſſions from within, and the vaſt Variety of Acci-

Accidents from without, which are continually provoking us to Grief, or Anger, or ſome other diſorderly exceſſes: Theſe are perſonal and of a piece with us.

The Loſſes in our Eſtates, the ſurpriſing Diſappointments in our Expectations and Deſigns; The hurry of Buſineſs, the Strife and Contention our Affairs engage us in; The Travel of the Poor, and the Cares of the Rich; The Anguiſh of our Afflicted, and the Uncertainty of our moſt Proſperous Condition; The Treachery of pretending Friends, and the Spight of profeſs'd Enemies; The Snares of Converſation, the Vanity and extreme danger even of thoſe Diverſions and Pleaſures, by which we labour to lighten this load of Life, and gain ſome Intervals of Eaſe at leaſt, by forgetting for a little while our Cares and Calamities: Theſe, and a thouſand Difficulties more, are inſeparable incumbrances of Mortality, to every one, conſidered Singly, and apart from his Relations and Engagements in Society.

But as thoſe Capacities increaſe, our Sorrows and Labours increaſe with them. The Care of Families, and kind Concern for thoſe whom Nature hath made a Part of our ſelves; The Fears and anxious Thoughts for their Safety, the Fellow-feeling of their Sufferings; The reſtleſs Endeavours to help them in their Diſtreſſes, and the cutting

regret we endure, when we would aſſiſt them but cannot, or when they will not ſuffer us to do them the Good we could; And (to name no more, that Calamity which all of you at this time are very deeply affected with) the having thoſe Friends taken from us, whom Nature, or Kindneſs, or their own Worth, have rendred very dear and neceſſary. The tearing, as it were, our very hearts aſunder, by cutting off that tendereſt part of them, whom God and Affection had incorporated and made one with us; Theſe are Tryals, which we have ſo quick and piercing a Senſe of, that it is much leſs difficult to lament and complain as they deſerve, than to temper our Reſentments, and keep them within the Bounds of Duty, and Decency, and Chriſtian Moderation.

It were eaſy to give you a yet more moving Spectacle, by opening the Proſpect a little wider; and urging the Uneaſineſs we feel from the Diſtreſſes of the Needy, the Injuries of the Oppreſſed, the Cryes of Helpleſs Widows and Orphans; the Corruptions, or the Calamitous Circumſtances of the State, or the Church, whereof we are Members; All which affect us more ſenſibly, in proportion as we are better-natured Men, that is, better Chriſtians. But That, which is to ſuch the moſt afflicting Conſideration of all is, that theſe things do not only create a preſent Uneaſineſs, but may

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likewiſe, if not very carefully managed, lay the foundation of Eternal Miſery. That they are the Temptations and Inſtruments of Sin, ſuch as the Frailty of humane Nature is but too apt, alas! to be overborn by; Such as are often ſucceſsful even againſt the moſt Watchful and Reſolute; And therefore, of all other Labours in this fight of Afflictions, the Wiſe and Good Man eſteems thoſe the heavieſt, which hazard the Salvation of his Soul; And no Conſideration renders a Deliverance from the Sufferings of Life, half ſo deſirable, as that mentioned by St. * *Paul*; that *He that is dead is freed from Sin.* Rom. vi. 7.

Theſe are all of them ſuch Labours, as the Condition we now live in naturally expoſes every Man to; And the very Severeſt of them ſuch, as the Providence of God hath not thought fit to exempt the holieſt and beſt beloved of his Servants from. They, like their Captain, are made perfect through Hardſhips and Sufferings. Theſe are their *Spiritual Warfare*, the Exerciſes of their Virtue, the Proofs of their Patience and Fidelity, and conſtant Love to Him. And God is not much concerned to be very exact in the meaſures of Good and Evil in this Life, becauſe this Life is not the Seaſon of final Retribution: But he hath appointed another, wherein he knows how to make Good Men ample amends for all they do and ſuffer for him here.

The Benefits we are to expect at present, are the Wisdom and Kindness of his Providence to turn every Affliction to our good, the powerful Assistances of his Grace to support us under our Conflicts, and the merciful Execution of that Decree, which, *after we have toiled and suffered a while*, may translate us to a State of Rest and Peace; may render that Death, which to mere Nature is so gastly and formidable, a Blessing and Privilege, for such in truth it is in the Eye of Faith, and to those *who dye in the Lord.* ☞

For ought not this to be a very Supporting Consideration, in the midst of difficulties and troubles, that, though these hemm us round, and thrust sore at us now, yet there is a day coming in which we shall make our escape from them all? That God will hide us in the Grave, and set us on that Shore, where we shall, full of Security, look back upon this tempestuous World, and have no part of the Storms that tost us here, but only the Remembrance of them, left. A Remembrance so much more joyful, as the Miseries we call to mind were formerly more grievous: But especially, Is it not a mighty Comfort, to think we shall shortly put off this load of Infirmities; that we shall be perfectly at quiet from all the disturbance which the lustings of the Flesh against the Spirit, and the irreconcilable War in our Members

Members create us every day and hour; that God will not only cover our Head in the Battel, but take us out of the Field, into a ſure retreat, where the Enemy of Souls cannot hurt us, nor Temptation aſſault us, nor corrupt Nature betray us, nor pain, or affliction, or danger overtake us? Surely * *Man that is born to trouble, as the ſparks fly upwards*, hath reaſon to be pleaſed with ſuch a Refuge as This; Surely That ought to be no ſmall Recommendation of the future State of Good Chriſtians, which the Voice from Heaven gives in the xxi*th* of this Book at the 4*th verſe*, that *God ſhall wipe away all tears from their Eyes, and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more pain: for the former things are paſſed away.* So valuable a Bleſſing it is, merely to reſt from their Labours; ſo proper this Argument to reconcile us to Death, that it removes us into a place of Eaſe and Safety. But if this make Death tolerable, there is ſomething behind, which makes it even deſirable. The proſpect of a Deliverance may ſuſtain us under our troubles, but it is enough to prevail with us, not only to bear, but even to bleſs our Troubles, when we reflect, that though our Sufferings are left behind, yet the Virtue and Effect of them are not. For that is the Second Reaſon,

* Job v. 7.

II. Where

II. Wherefore *the Dead are blessed, who dye in the Lord*, that they do not only rest from their Labours, *but their Works follow them.* The Toil and Drudgery is at an End, and all that could be grievous to them is put off with that Body, which exposed them to Corruption and Suffering; But those Labours are not forgotten, Their Diligence and Conscientious Care, The Meekness and Resignation wherewith they were endured, sticks by the Labourer still; And, as to all the desirable and advantagious purposes, will be sure to keep him company for ever in the other World. For by this Expression of their *Works following them*, is meant that Good Acceptance and great Reward, which the Saints shall be sure to find after Death, for what they have done well during this present Life.

We must not from This, or from any Other Expressions like it in Scripture, infer such Merit and Sufficiency in the best works of the best Men, as can convey to them a Right to demand this happiness, as in Rigour and Equity their due. For

* Rom. iii. 23. *All have come short of the Glory of God*, and *no Flesh* Psal. cxliii. 2. *can be justified in his Sight, should Judgment*, and not Mercy, be the Standard of his Proceedings. But hereby is meant, that according to the Terms of the Gospel-Covenant, which, for the Sake and Sufferings

ferings of Christ, promiseth Pardon for Sins repented of, Compassion for Infirmities not indulged, and a Recompence for those Good Actions which the Grace of God hath wrought in, and by, and with us, Every sincere Christian shall not fail to be abundantly considered, for, and in proportion to, what he hath performed and endured, as became him, in the days of his Flesh. I say, *abundantly* considered; More or less, as the Tryals and Instances of each Man's Virtue have been more or less; but yet in such manner and measure, as far exceeds the Value of his best Works, and the Degree of his sharpest Afflictions. For St. *Paul* hath assured us, * That the *Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us*, and that † *these light Afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* In short, God will deal with such Men, according to the Riches of his own infinite Mercy, and make them actually happy then, far above what they now are able so much as to conceive.

* Rom. viii 18.

† 2 Cor. iv. 16.

For how indeed can it be supposed, that We, in this imperfect State of things, should have any distinct Notions of that future, and vastly different State, when this dross of Earth and sensual Appetites, shall be purified; when the Faculties of our Mind shall be enlarged; freed from Preju-

1 Cor. xiii. 12. dice and Errour, and not ſee as now, * *darkly and through a Glaſs*, but *know even as alſo we are known.* When we raiſe our Souls as high as poſſibly we can, yet even then our thoughts are cloudy and confuſed. *We ſpeak as Children, we think as Children, we underſtand as Children*; but when we come to the *fullneſs of the Stature of perfect Men in Chriſt Jeſus*, theſe childiſh things ſhall be put away, and we ſhall have quite other apprehenſions of the matter. Then ſhall we ſee, and know, and feel, that all thoſe lofty deſcriptions of Heavenly Joys in Scripture, which now ſo hardly gain our belief, are much beneath the Dignity of that Happineſs they would repreſent and recommend to us; And that thoſe Images were made uſe of, not becauſe they were worthy and proportionable, but becauſe they were the fitteſt and beſt reſemblances of that Bliſs which We were capable of. And therefore even in theſe nobleſt flights, there is all along a condeſcenſion to our weakneſſes; A veil of Figures and ſenſible Similitudes drawn before that Glory, which is too ſtrong and bright for our naked Eye, too big for even Thoughts and Wiſhes, much more for Words, to reach and come up to.

O! the incomprehenſible Excellence of that knowledge, which ſhall ſee God as he is, and liken the Soul to the Excellence it ſees! O the Delights of that Wonder and Praiſe and perpetual Thankſ-

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giving, with which glorified Saints extol the amazing Wiſdom, and Juſtice, and Goodneſs of God! The mighty Satisfaction of being let in to the hidden Treaſures of his Mercy, the exact harmony of his Providence, the Myſteries of his Nature, and his Dealings with Mankind, which now pretending Mortals wrangle and raiſe ſuch a Duſt about! O the perfect purity and tranquility of a Life free from Luſt and Paſſion, from doubtful and painful Struggles, and ever chooſing, ever delighting in, that which is good! O the Charms of that entire Love, and Peace, and joynt Conſent, in honouring and ſerving God, and rejoycing in each other's Happineſs; void of that Envy, and Grudging, that Jealouſy and Diſcord, that Ill-nature, or Selfiſhneſs, thoſe Perſonal Injuries, or differences in Intereſts and Opinions, which will not ſuffer us to enjoy a perfect Unity in this World! O Gracious God, *how plentiful is thy Goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for Them that fear thee!* They pay thee a ſhort imperfect Obedience, and what is this, that the King of Heaven ſhould recompence it with ſo great a Reward! They are *unprofitable Servants*, and yet thou makeſt them Sit down at thy Table in thy Kingdom! Their Sins and Frailties are Many, and *Thoſe* are remembred no more; their Good Deeds in compariſon but very few, and yet not one of *Theſe* is forgotten! Their preſent Labours and Sufferings have their

Intervals and Comforts, and are but light and ſhort at worſt; light in conſideration of that future weight of Glory; ſhort and even as nothing to that Eternity of Bliſs, that pure uninterrupted Bliſs, which they work out for them. Nor doſt thou, Bleſſed Jeſus, put off theſe Labourers with diſtant Proſpects and uneaſy Expectations: For no ſooner does that Night come on in which they can work no longer, but they are called to preſent payment. The Combat once ended, and the Race run, the Conquerour is crown'd without delay. Which brings me to the third Circumſtance, whereby this Spirit here repreſents to us the Bleſſedneſs of Good Men departed; and that is

III. The Time when they enter upon their Happineſs, intimated in that Term fixed in thoſe words, *Bleſſed are the Dead which dye in the Lord from henceforth.* I am not ignorant, what differing Interpretations are put upon this word in the Original, but neither the Time, nor the preſent Temper of your Minds, will bear ſo cold a thing as Criticiſing now. And therefore it ſhall ſuffice to ſay, that both the Senſe in which I have all along taken the words, and the Church in uſing them at the Burial of every Chriſtian, do warrant us to conclude, that this Reſt from Labour, and the Reward of Good Works, begin at the inſtant of *Men's dying in the Lord.*

Lord. And if the paſſage before us do not ſufficiently prove this, yet there are Others which may even oblige us to underſtand it ſo. The Labourers in the Vineyard, aſſoon as ever the Even was come, * and the Duty of the Day over, are called to receive their Wages. *Lazarus* immediately upon his Death, is ſaid † *to be carried by Angels into Abraham's boſom, and comforted for the Evil things he received in his Life-time.* St. * *Paul*, upon mentioning his departure at hand, and reflecting upon the *good fight he had fought*, declares, that from *thenceforth there was laid up for him a Crown of Righteouſneſs.* Perhaps indeed this Crown is not yet ſo bright, nor *Lazarus* his happineſs ſo exquiſite, as it will be at the laſt great day of account. But ſtill that Crown was determined and fixed from the day of this Apoſtle's departure, though he is to be more ſolemnly inveſted with it, at the day when the Righteous Judge ſhall appear. And *Lazarus* was at leaſt in a Condition of *Comfort*, Such as made him good amends for the Poverty and Diſeaſes he had undergone in his Body. So that theſe Paſſages, as well as that of the Labourers in the Vineyard, ſufficiently confute that fond imagination which ſome have entertained, of the Soul ſleeping in a State of Inſenſibility till the general Reſurrection; They alſo overthrow that profitable Deluſion of the Romiſh Purgatory, and render Prayers for the

* Matth. xx. 8.

† Luke xvi 22, 25.

* 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

Dead ſuperfluous and uſeleſs. For how can they be *comforted* who have no Senſe? What occaſion have they for our Prayers, who are already bleſſed? or how can *they* be ſaid to *reſt from their Labours*, who paſs from hence into a Condition of Torments, more exquiſite by far than this Life can poſſibly endure? and yet ſuch the Popiſh Purgatory is repreſented. So juſt ground have we to conclude, that there is no Interval between the End of Good Men's Labour, and the Beginning of their Reſt; So ſubſtantial a Reaſon is it of their Happineſs, that their Works do not only follow them at a diſtance, but keep them company, go with them hand in hand, and render the Dead *bleſſed*, from the very moment of *their Dying in the Lord.*

Reade II. I have now done with my firſt general Head, and after ſo largely inſiſting upon it, ſhall think it neceſſary to ſay leſs upon my Second, which conſiſts of ſuch Inferences, as are proper to be drawn from the foregoing Particulars. And they (among many Others) may be Theſe that follow.

1. As Firſt. We ſhall do well ſeriouſly to conſider what vaſt encouragement theſe words contain to a Godly Life. For it muſt always be remembred, that the Glorious Privileges we have hitherto been treating of do not belong to all indifferently, but only to ſuch as *Dye in the Lord.*

That

That is, (as was declared in the beginning of this Diſcourſe) To Them that embrace the Faith of Jeſus, that live up to the Principles of the Goſpel, and perſevere in doing ſo to the End of their Days. As for Thoſe, who either refuſe and oppoſe this Belief, or who *hold it in unrighteouſneſs*, their Caſe is the very Reverſe of what we have been deſcribing. They are ſo far from finding Reſt after their Labours, that all the Evils they ſuſtain in this world, are light and gentle, and leſs than nothing, in compariſon of the intolerable, the unconceivable, the infinitely heavier Miſeries, reſerved for them in another. Their *Works follow them too*, but it is to upbraid them with their Guilt and Impenitence, to wound them with ſad and fruitleſs Remorſe, to teſtify againſt them in the Great Day of Account, and to condemn them to everlaſting Flames. Let me then moſt earneſtly conjure, let me prevail with, All that hear me, to Secure a Title to this Bleſſedneſs, by breaking off their Iniquities from this very moment. And this will beſt be done by poſſeſſing their minds with juſt and worthy Notions of theſe Comforts in my Text; by conſidering what vaſt amends will be made them for all the hardſhips of Virtue here; and how wretched an Exchange thoſe Men will make at laſt, who indulge the pleaſures of Sin for a ſeaſon, at the prodigious Expence, the certain and irrecoverable

Loſs

Loſs, of their Souls and Eternal Happineſs hereafter. The Severeſt Doctrines of the Goſpel have more than enough to enforce their practice upon us, if we would but conſider them impartially, and proceed upon the ſame Meaſures, which humane Prudence puts us upon in the Affairs of this World. And What are the Affairs of this world, when put into the ballance againſt our Spiritual Concerns? What are the troubled and imperfect Joys of Senſe, which a thouſand cares and fears, pains and diſaſters innumerable diſturb, in compariſon of that ſweet and ſure Repoſe above, which nothing can annoy? What are the Honours, the Wealth, the Pomp we ſo eagerly purſue here, if ſet againſt the Glories of Saints, and the ineſtimable Treaſures of our heavenly Father's Kingdom? Truſt me, Such gains are no where to be had, ſo cheaply to be bought, ſo certain to be obtained, ſo durable in the Enjoyment. No gains indeed are durable but theſe; Nothing turns to True account, but Piety and Virtue. And This is profitable for all things, ſo exceeding profitable, that we could not have hoped, we could not have imagined it; and if any other than God the Giver had told us of this, we could not have ben ſo eaſy as to believe, ſo preſumptuous as to expect it.

2. Secondly. The Conſiderations, which went before, are very proper to arm our minds againſt the Fear of Death. A paſſion, where it prevails to any great degree, of all Others the moſt Tyrannical and tormenting. It muſt be ſo: Becauſe Scaring us perpetually with hideous Apprehenſions of a Danger, which, we are fully ſatisfied beforehand, it is not poſſible with all our Induſtry to ſhun. And this domineering Evil is what nothing but Chriſtianity ever was, or could be, a match for. But when we conſider how many things there are, which may juſtly abate our fondneſs for This Life, and that they who *dye in the Lord* are effectually delivered from all theſe: When we look upon Death as a neceſſary Paſſage to Happineſs; and reflect, that the inſtant we ceaſe to be miſerable here, we take poſſeſſion of a never failing Bliſs in another State; This puts quite another face upon the matter, from what it carries to the Wicked, or to the Natural, Man. * *The Sting of Death is Sin*, ſays the Apoſtle, that is, the Only thing which can in reaſon render Dying terrible, is the being called to an account for our evil deeds. But the Goſpel frees us from the Bondage of this Fear too. It ſhews us a Victorious Redeemer, One, who hath made Satisfaction for the Sins of Mankind, and by ſo doing hath triumphed over Death; nay, hath

* 1 Cor. xv. 56.

per-

perfectly changed the nature of the thing; and made it a Bleſſing to them that *dye in Him.* And This is what we may all do, by the aſſiſtance of his Grace, which is wanting to none, who ſeek and uſe it diligently. So that, upon the whole matter, this Fear is an Affliction, in our power to correct and moderate at leaſt. We may conquer it as Chriſtians, though we cannot wholly remove it, as Men; For the better we are provided for the Approach of Death, the leſs troubleſome all Apprehenſions of it will be to us. And a firm proſpect of our future Bleſſedneſs would bring us, ſo far as is conſiſtent with our Duty, even to thirſt and pant, and long for that very Diſſolution, which now we ſtart and tremble at, and take ſuch infinite pains to run away from.

3. Thirdly. From hence we may fetch the moſt, in truth the only, powerful Argument, to ſupport us under any Injuries or Afflictions, that befall us in this preſent World. To think, that Theſe things cannot laſt long, is ſome, but far from a ſufficient, Conſolation. But to be aſſured, that they will turn to our Advantage, an incomparably greater Advantage, ſuch as bears no proportion at all to the utmoſt we can ever endure, this is a ſubſtantial Stay to our Spirits. To reflect, that He who afflicts us in the mean while, does it for our good,

and

and out of fatherly tenderneſs; that what we complain of is the Exerciſe of our Virtue, and every Freſh tryal a higher Step to Perfection; that not One Sigh or groan vaniſhes into Air, but reaches the Ears of the Almighty; not One Tear falls to the ground, but all are *put into his Bottle*, (as *David* expreſſes it *;) not One Injury or Affront we ever forgave, but it hath contributed to the forgiveneſs of our infinitely more heinous Offences againſt God; Not One pang, or Sickneſs we have gone through, patiently and with a Chriſtian Reſignation, but it will be paid us back with Intereſt in perfect Joy: Theſe are the invincible weapons of a Good Man, ſuch as harden, and render him proof, againſt all the Aſſaults of Ill Men, and what we call Ill fortune. And he who is careful to have this Armour girt cloſe about him, will find his Courage keep up with his Faith, and be able to *withſtand in the Evil day, and having done all to Stand.*

* Pſal. lvi. 8.

Fourthly and Laſtly. What hath been now ſaid may and ought to prevent, or at leaſt to check thoſe Sallies of exceſſive Grief, which we are too often diſpoſed to give a looſe to, when it pleaſes God to remove Good Men, and eſpecially our Friends and Relations, out of the World. For do the Men, who indulge ſuch Paſſions, conſider at all what they ſay or do, when they profeſs this Concern for ſuch Per-

ſons? For Them? Why are we ſorry for Them? Is it ſuch an inſupportable Calamity to us, that they whom we loved moſt dearly, have after many painful ſtruggles broke looſe at laſt from Misfortunes and Diſeaſes, from Hazards and Dangers, from Sorrow and Sin? Do we uſe to weep and lament, when our beſt Friends eſcape many a terrible Storm, and come Safe into Port; eſpecially too, if the Returns of their Voyage have been proſperous beyond all Imagination? Yet this (*my Brethren*) is directly the Caſe of our Friends who are *dead in the Lord.* And can we ſuppoſe that the being ſorry for Their Happineſs is an Argument of Our Love? This is moſt abſurd. And it is plain our refuſing to be comforted in ſuch caſes, proceeds from want of conſidering how happy They really are; or elſe it is not Kindneſs for Them but for our Selves. And yet if it be for our ſelves; Do we not think it a neceſſary proof of affection, to be pleaſed with the very great Advantage of a particular Friend, though We ſuffer ſome little uneaſineſs or Inconvenience by it? And ſhall we not be content, that a Uſeful Neighbour, a Darling Child, or a tender Husband, ſhould be bleſſed above what we can frame any Idea of to our Selves, though we muſt not enjoy his Company here any longer? But a good Man you'll ſay, can leaſt of all be ſpared; True. When we ſpeak and think as Men; But if

we

we argue as Christians; It is as true, that such a one we may best bear to part with. Because the better the Man is, the more assured hope we have of his obtaining that better Life; which is the most Effectual Argument to Soften these Tryals of our Resignation to us.

And therefore I cannot but think it very well becomes me to exhort You the Relations of this deceased, that you would dry up your Tears; And, from the dark Side of this afflicting Providence to your selves, turn your thoughts rather to the bright prospect of his happy Change. For such I make no doubt we shall think it, if to my two former Heads, be added that very Little, which I have still to speak upon my Third and Last, wherein I promised to apply my Self to the Circumstances of this Person, upon whose account we are now met, and whose Remains of Mortality lye here before us.

III. When I say I will add but little, you will not so understand me, as if the Subject would not bear a great deal. But Much is not necessary, when I speak to Them, who have had the happiness of a longer Acquaintance than my Self; and therefore All I have to do, is only to refresh your Memories, with some of those remarkably good qualities and actions, which I have received from persons of un-

doubted Authority, and ſuch as your ſelves will bear teſtimony to upon the mention of them. And here I ſhall follow the method of my Text.

1*ſt.* then. It could not be but a Perſon of his Engagements in the world muſt have a ſhare of Labours and Troubles, Loſſes and Diſappointments; All which were entertained with great Moderation, and juſt Reflections upon that Providence of God, which diſpoſes of Us and Ours as he ſees fit. But beſides theſe Tryals, it pleaſed God, in his later years, to afflict him with Sore Pains and frequent Diſtempers. All which he bore with ſuch Evenneſs of Mind, that even the Rackings of the Gout and Stone could not often provoke him to Any, and never to ſuch as were Unbecoming, Complaints. God exerciſed that patience, we may hope, to increaſe the Reward of it, and to render it exemplary, among thoſe who obſerved and converſed with it. And that Meekneſs and Submiſſion, which continued to his very laſt hours, notwithſtanding the moſt acute pangs, of one of the moſt inſupportable Diſeaſes mankind are ſubject to, give us juſt ground of Confidence, that he is now at reſt from his Labours, and that *it is good for him to have been ſo afflicted*, ſince Troubles thus ſuſtained never fail to turn to the Sufferers unſpeakable Advantage.

2. But

2. But it was not in the Paſſive kind alone, that he diſcharged himſelf ſo well, his Virtue was Active too. Many of his good Works there are, which ſhould not, and Some, which ſcarcely can be, forgotten. Such were his Honeſty and Strict Juſtice in his Dealings. His Moderation and Prudence, The Peaceableneſs of his Temper, and Readineſs to compoſe Differences, His Integrity and Candour, his Modeſty and Humility, which recommended him to the Converſation, and the good Opinion of all that had opportunities of knowing him. He was remarkably careful to diſcharge the duty of thoſe ſeveral Capacities God placed him in. An Affectionate Husband, a kind Relation, a faithful and generous Friend. And though he left no Iſſue of his own, yet did not that deſtroy but diffuſe rather the Relation of a Father, for he was ſuch in ſome ſort to ſeveral, whom Nature had ſetat a greater diſtance from him. His Piety and great Regard to Religion was teſtified by attending diligently upon the publick Worſhip of God, as oft as his Indiſpoſitions would permit. And his Love of the Beauty and Decency of the Houſe and Service of his Great Maſter cannot dye, ſo long as the * Place where we are now aſſembled, Stands. For This is a laſting Monument of that Generoſity and Godly Zeal, which moved in the foremoſt rank of thoſe many noble Contributors, to ſo neceſſary, ſo becoming, ſo

* Deptford Church rebuilt, 1697

so pious a Work. And his Charity to the Living Temples of the Holy Ghost, as it was freely extended upon fit occasions in his Life-time, so is it continued in a very large and useful Provision for the Benefit of the Poor after his Death. I forbear several of the Works of this kind, which, together with these now mentioned, no doubt *do follow him*, and are already, (we trust) begun to be repaid, in the Comforts and Joys of a Blessed Immortality.

The only thing left for us to do is carefully to copy after such good Examples, that when we shall be called upon, (as shortly we shall) we may with holy Trust and steady Submission to God's Will, commit our selves into the hands of our most merciful Creator, and Redeemer. And such a Trust and chearful Resignation, I, who, by the particular Approbation of his Reverend and very worthy Pastor, attended him in his last hours, did with great Satisfaction observe in Him in the very Agonies of Death. For even then his Mind was much composed, and except the tender Impressions which the Tears of his dearest Relations made upon his Spirits, all seem'd easy and full of Content to him. So much power had the Hopes of a better World to Sustain him in his last conflicts. But now those conflicts are happily over, and the truest Honour and Affection we can pay to his Memory, is to bless God for that perfect Peace, and sweet Tranquility which

we believe he hath exchanged this dangerous and troubleſome life for; and ſo to imitate his commendable Actions, and reſemble his meek Chriſtian temper and good diſpoſitions, that We may in God's due time meet again, at our Joyful and bleſſed Reſurrection; Even then, when all Thoſe who *have dyed in the Lord* ſhall *ſhine as the Brightneſs of the Firmament*, when theſe *vile Bodies of ours ſhall be faſhioned after Chriſt's glorious Body*, to live, and reign with Him for ever and ever. So amply ſhall even theſe Bodies be recompenced for their preſent Sufferings and Decay; So ſweet ſhall be their Reſt: To ſo excellent purpoſes ſhall every good Man's works follow him. Which that Ours may do, let us pray and endeavour with all our might, that we may live and dye in Him, who lived and dyed and roſe again for us, the Bleſſed Jeſus the Son of God: To whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, Three Perſons and One God, be all Honour and Glory, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.

Books Written by George Stanhope, D.D.

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